

MISTRUST OF GOD DEPLORED AND DENOUNCED

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“How long will it be ere they believe me?”
Numbers 14:11.

THE children of Israel were very prone to unbelief. They wanted something visible to worship and to trust. They could not learn the lesson of faith in the one great Invisible and hence they were one day bowing before an idol, and the next they were murmuring against the true God. Their life was according to the flesh, after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and hence they praised God when Pharaoh was drowned and when manna lay round about their camp, but the moment they were in want or difficulty, and saw no supply or relief, they could not trust in God, but began to mistrust and murmur.

With what wonderful longsuffering the Lord bore with them! His mercy seemed to outrun their unbelief. They cried for water and they doubted God's power to give it to them in the desert sands, but lo, the smitten rock poured forth a crystal stream. Then they cried for bread and charged the Lord with bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger, and yet in answer to their murmuring, the heavens were opened and there fell a shower of angels' food for them to feast upon.

They then clamored for flesh and they had not long begun their unbelieving murmurs before a strong wind brought them up quails till they fed even to the full. Such liberal answers to their vexatious murmurings ought to have silenced their fears and they should henceforth have exhibited confidence in their great Friend. Yet they did not do so, but for forty years they provoked the Lord.

The incident before us relates to that great and terrible provocation in which the longsuffering of God came to a pause. They sent spies into Canaan and when they were informed by ten false-hearted men that the giants were in the land, and that the inhabitants of it dwelt in walled cities which they could not hope to capture, they then began to accuse the Lord according to their former manner, denying His power to fulfill His ancient covenant, and give them the land that flowed with milk and honey. This time the Lord lifted His hand and swore that they should not enter into His rest.

Let us be warned by this fact that there is a limit to the longsuffering of God, and especially when it is tried by distrust. He may bear with unbelief for a time, and blessed be His name, for a long time, for He remembers that we are dust. But when it comes to willful perseverance in unbelief, the Lord will not forever be thus provoked. It behooves us to listen to the words of Paul, “Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

This morning my one subject is this sin of unbelief, which I desire to deal with in the fear of God and in the power of His Holy Spirit.

I. Our first head shall be—the sin of Israel is here DEFINED. “How long will it be ere they believe me?”

Observe that God's account of all the murmuring, and discouragement, and fear, which these people felt was simply that they did not believe *Him*. They doubtless said that they were naturally afraid of their enemies—the Anakim, the sons of the giants, these would overtop and overcome them. They seemed like grasshoppers in the sight of such gigantic beings and therefore they might well tremble. Had they been ordinary men, however numerous their bands, Israel declared that they should not have been afraid, but these huge monsters created a natural and unavoidable fear.

“No,” says God, “that is an idle excuse. No fear of giants would enter their minds if they believed *Me*. How long will it be ere they believe *me*?” If these sons of Anak had been ten times as high as they

were, yet the almighty Lord could vanquish them, and if their cities had been literally as well as figuratively walled up to the skies, yet JEHOVAH could smite them out of heaven and cast their ramparts into the dust. Gigantic men and fortified cities are nothing to Him who divided the Red Sea. When the Omnipotent is present, opposition vanishes.

This was so clear that, if the Israelites were afraid, the real reason was that they did not believe their God. So, my brethren, let us strip our discouragements and murmurings of all their disguises, and see them in their true character and they will appear in their own naked deformity as discrediting God. It is true the difficulty before us may appear great, but it cannot be great to the Lord who has promised to make us more than conquerors. It is true the circumstances may appear unusually perplexing, but they cannot perplex Him who has promised to guide us with His counsel. And since we are well aware of this, it is clear that the true reason why we are so dismayed is not to be found in the difficulties and the circumstances, but in our misgivings of God.

“Ah,” but these people might have replied, “we fear because of our weakness. We are not a drilled host like the armies of Egypt. We know not how to fight against chariots of iron. We are only feeble men, with all these women and children to encumber our march. We cannot hope to drive out the hordes of Amalekites and Canaanites. A sense of weakness is the cause of our terror and complaint.”

But the Lord puts the matter very differently. What had their weakness to do with His promise? How could their weakness affect His power to give them the land? He could conquer Amalek if they could not. Caleb had told them, “If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land.” They knew that their feebleness had not prevented the Lord’s bringing them out of Egypt, despite the pride and power of Pharaoh, and they must have known that He could with equal ease overthrow the Canaanites and their armies. Their weakness could only be a foil to the glory of the divine power, so that it would be made the more conspicuous.

We also, when we plead our weakness, ought to be ashamed, for we know that we can do all things through Christ which strengthens us. If we probe to the bottom of those doubts and fears which apparently arise out of a sense of our own weakness, we shall find that they spring from mistrust of God. Our trembling is not humility, but unbelief. We may mask it however we please, but that is the state of the case as God sees it and He sees it in truth. The question is not, “How long will they be weak?” but, “How long will it be ere they believe *me*?”

“No, no,” the people may have said, “we are not murmuring against God, it is against Moses and Aaron. They made a mistake when they brought us into the wilderness and they have undertaken an enterprise which they cannot carry through—we blame these two men for their foolhardiness.” But the Lord would not have it so. Moses and Aaron were only His instruments and mere second causes, and the Lord will not allow that the quarrel is with them, but He asks, “How long will it be ere they believe *me*?”

Thus, brethren, we sometimes fix upon our fellow man, his infirmity, his shortsightedness, his want of wisdom, and we say that we do not doubt God, but we can never feel secure while our leaders or our friends are such poor, unwise creatures. If you put this pretext to the test, you will see that it avails nothing, for God can use what instruments He pleases, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, and He can accomplish His purposes despite their frailty. His word is not to fall to the ground because of the medium through which He carries it into effect. Strip our distrust of the agents whom God employs of all the masks with which it seeks to disguise itself and it comes to this—we do not believe God.

Our dreading and complaining are often a kind of practical atheism. I mean this, that if God has pronounced a promise and we doubt its fulfillment for any cause whatever, we think and feel as if there were no God. We profess to believe that the promises of Scripture are the promises of God Himself and it follows that if we doubt their fulfillment, we do as good as deny the Godhead of the Promiser, since he who cannot or will not keep his promises cannot be God at all. The word of the true God has been proven to be omnipotent by its creating force and therefore promises which are not of like power cannot be the word of the one almighty God.

Dare we make it out that God speaks frivolously and that His solemn promises are like the false words of man, which mock the ear and disappoint the hope? Are God's promises like yon withered leaves which the passing wind bears into forgetfulness? Then I say that such a God is no God at all and such a conception sets up a false god and robs the true God of His essential character. Is it not so?

Sometimes we put our doubts in one shape and sometimes in another, and we are apt to claim that we do not really doubt God—for we know that He both can and will keep His promises as a rule—but for certain reasons we doubt whether He will keep His word *to us*. We talk of our unworthiness and so on, but being interpreted, our inmost thought is that we can believe anything of God but that which it is the most necessary for us to believe. We believe all other words but that very one which we are most called upon to credit. Strange faith, which will exert itself everywhere but where it is wanted!

We claim that if things were otherwise than they are, we could believe God, and what is this but to say that under existing circumstances we do not conceive Him to be worthy of our confidence? He who doubts that particular promise which God speaks to him may as well doubt all the rest, since they all hang together, and they are either all of them falsehoods or all of them eternal verities. Yes, this is the essence of it—our timorous suspicions of any one promise are a reflection upon the Lord Himself.

So, brethren, I come back to that first point, and solemnly declare that though our doubts and fears are called oftentimes by more respectable names, because we do not like to see their sin in all its nakedness, yet they come to this—that we do not believe the ever-blessed God. If we look at our discouragement and mistrust in this light, we shall no longer pity, but blame ourselves, and instead of excusing, we shall accuse our heart of a great crime. Mistrust towards God is not a mere weakness, it is a wickedness of the gravest order.

II. We will now proceed, in the second place, to further DESCRIBE this sin of not believing.

I would remark, first, that at the first blush *it would seem incredible* that there should be such a thing in the universe as unbelief of God. That God should manifest Himself to man so as to make a promise to Him is indescribable condescension. One would think that the high and lofty One would abide in His eternal silence, or communicate Himself to the most exalted creatures, rather than speak to such a being as man.

What is man that God should be mindful of him and speak to him? Yet we believe that the Lord has often spoken to us by His prophets and in these last days by His Son. Now, if an angel altogether unacquainted with human history could be informed that God had spoken to men, I imagine that his astonishment would be overwhelming if we also informed him that men have disbelieved Him. “What!” he would say. “What! Dare to disbelieve the Lord! Doubt the Lord, whose infinite love stooped to speak with His creature! God, who is essential truth and cannot possibly lie nor deceive—have there been creatures vile enough to perpetrate such an insult upon their Maker, their Benefactor? Can they suspect the infinitely pure of deceit? Dare they question the truth of the perfect One whom cherubim adore?” I say that an angel would be staggered at such blasphemy.

Why, look you, sirs, the Lord spoke to nothingness, and out came this globe, swathed in the swaddling bands of darkness. He spoke again and forth leaped the light, and all things were quickened into life and clothed with beauty. The power of His word was all-creating—and is it to be imagined or conceived that this word can be a lie? JEHOVAH's word is but Himself in action, His will making itself manifest. And is it to be supposed that this can be a lie under any conceivable circumstances whatsoever?

My brethren, it is sorrowful to have to confess that what looks like inconceivable blasphemy has nevertheless been perpetrated abundantly by the sons of men. Shame on our race that ever it should thus have insulted the Most High God! Oh, the incredible infamy which lies even in the bare thought of calling in question the veracity of God. It is so vile, so unjust, so profane a thing that it ought to be regarded with horror as a monstrous wrong.

Consider, next, that, though unbelief certainly exists, *it is a most unreasonable thing*. If God has made a promise, on what grounds do we doubt its fulfillment? Which of all the attributes of God is that

which comes under suspicion? Probably the first distrusted attribute will be His power. Have not men said, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Or can He deliver us out of the deep waters?” Let us think of this. Has the Lord promised to supply and deliver? Then, my dear friend, do you really in your sober senses question the power of God to do as He has said? Has He not made the heavens and the earth? Do not all things subsist by His continuous power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His hand paralyzed that He cannot achieve His purpose? The more we consider the supposition that God is unable to keep His promises, the more we discard it with indignation. It is not to be entertained for a moment.

What, then, is it God’s goodness that we suspect? After He has filled the world with bounty and multiplied His lovingkindnesses to His creatures—above all, after He has given from His bosom His only-begotten Son to die, as the fulfillment as well as the seal of the great promises of His covenant—dare we question His goodness? Do we call God evil? Do we impute unkindness to Him? Let horror seize us at the suggestion of such a thought. Let our bones quake that we should ever tolerate the hideous libel upon Him whose very name is good. For what is “God” but “good” written in brief?

It must come back to this with which we started, that we suspect the truth of God and yet the more we shall consider the supposition, the more we shall be alarmed by its blasphemous character. Do you believe, O man, the creature of God, that your Maker can belie Himself? Do you imagine that He can forswear Himself? With reverence do I speak the word, and awe is upon me as I utter it—do you profanely dream that He can perjure Himself? Yet every promise of His is virtually sealed with that oath by which the covenant is confirmed. He has lifted His hand to heaven and sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater, that by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.

Reason itself teaches that the Judge of all must Himself be just, and this He could not be if He were not true. Truth enters into the very conception of God—a false god is no God. Any other doubt in the world may plead some ground and warrant, but a doubt of God’s truthfulness is utterly unreasonable, and if sin had not filled man with madness, unbelief would never find harbor in a single bosom.

Again, because this sin is so unreasonable, *it is also most inexcusable*. Let me try, if I can, to frame an excuse for doubting the truthfulness of the Lord our God. Look back upon your own experience and take with it the experience of all men that have ever lived, and find, if you can, a single instance in which God has been untrue to the word He has spoken. We challenge eternity to divulge such an instance. We appeal to all mankind, from Adam to the latest born, and to angels, ay—and to devils themselves, to produce one single case in which JEHOVAH has turned from promise or from threatening so as to forfeit His word. His faithfulness is indisputable, the ages witness it.

Now, if there had been one instance, we might be justified in our misgivings. If we could find one authenticated case, fully established, in which God had acted contrary to His promise or failed to keep His word, then we might lawfully distrust, but as we can never find such a case, what excuse can we make?

Moreover, when a man is suspected of untruthfulness, we usually impute to him some motive for it—he has something to gain by the lie and therefore we suppose he will prove false. But what motive can be imputed to the Lord Most High which could lead Him to forfeit His word? He knows all things from the beginning and therefore even if it were supposable that to keep a promise would be inconvenient to Himself, He would never have made it, for He would have foreseen that inconvenience. God is not bound to promise and therefore if the good deed were not to His mind, He would not promise to perform it.

Nor has God changed, since immutability is essential to His being. If, therefore, He has uttered a word, you may rest quite sure that it will stand fast—an unchangeable being cannot be fickle and run back from His promise. Why, my friends, it is to God’s glory to keep His word. As it is to the glory of every man to be upright, so is it to the glory and honor of God to be faithful to His solemn declarations. Even on the lowest conceivable ground, the Lord’s own interests are bound up with His truth. All the

glory of His name and the honor of His divine person bend towards the keeping of His word. There is no supposable reason why the Lord should not be true. How dare we, then, without the slightest cause, cast suspicion upon the truthfulness of the Most High?

My dear brethren, I venture to say that unbelief of God's word *ought*, therefore, *to be impossible*. It ought to be impossible to every reverent-hearted man. Does he know God and tremble in His presence, and shall he think of distrusting and doubting Him? No one that has ever seen Him in contemplation and bowed before Him in sincere adoration, but must be amazed at the impertinence that would dare to think that God can lie.

O reverent heart, it ought to be to you beyond the bounds of possibility that you should doubt the truth of the promises of God! And this ought to be more impossible still, if such an expression may be used, to God's own children. You could not make a true-hearted child suspect his father of falsehood. If he heard such an accusation brought against a loving and kind father he would be indignant. He would not want to hear rebutting evidence, he would say, "It is impossible. I know my father. I know his character. I have seen him. I understand him. I cannot endure to hear him slandered and I do not need to hear him defended, for of this I am sure—that he cannot lie."

In the child's case, there might be a partiality and the father might have been guilty. But in the case of the children of God, no such possibility exists, for our Father is the God of truth. Oh, my brethren, shall it ever be said that the children of God doubt their Father? I have heard some professing Christians say that they find it hard to believe His promises and yet they do not appear to think that they have said a dreadful thing—yet a very dreadful thing it is. What must be their opinion of God if they find it hard to believe Him?

Think of it again—a child of God finding it hard to believe his own Father—his heavenly Father! Ah, wretched sin! Wretched insult to God! If *we* were not so false-hearted ourselves we should never dream of the Lord's being so, and if we were not conscious of being chargeable with untruth, the thought that perchance God might fail to fulfill His word would never be tolerated. It is horrible! If it has crossed your mind, scout it, and with many tears confess it before God, for to a child of God it ought to be impossible to doubt His Father's truthfulness.

To some children of God that impossibility ought to be still more striking, because certain of us have received special and infallible proofs of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises. He has answered the prayers of some of us in a way that has drowned our eyes with tears of joy. He has made us laugh like Sarah when the child of promise was given to her. We have felt amazed at the mighty goodness of our God and for us to doubt now should be impossible.

We ought to settle it in our minds that, come what may, though the earth were removed and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea—though everything should alter and the laws of nature should be changed, and day and night forget their time—yet would we never suppose, nor allow others to suppose, that God could be false to His promises and break His word.

I am resolved and my brethren, you will join with me in it and may God give us grace to carry it out—to doubt the evidence of my eyes, but not to doubt God—for our eyes have often deceived us, but JEHOVAH never. Light may play tricks with these poor optics, but the Lord has never spoken to mock us, nor said what He cannot perform. Resolve, my brethren, to doubt your ears and deny your hearing sooner than doubt your God, for sounds are often imaginary and ears are speedily duped. Resolve to doubt your most deliberate judgment rather than one word of the Lord.

How often have you been mistaken! Even when according to mathematical calculations it seems as certain as that twice two make four that God cannot execute His word, deny the mathematics but never doubt God. There is nothing certain under heaven but God. Uncertainty is upon all things but upon His word. If you consult with friends and in their judgment they all unanimously conclude that the case is hopeless and that the promise cannot be fulfilled, reject them all, and refuse to consult with flesh and blood. Let God be true and every man a liar, yea, and every *thing* a liar.

Doubt as much as you please your own feelings, it is seldom that they are to be relied upon. Mistrust, as I have already said, your own senses—they are but very fallible reporters of fact, but never distrust your God. If devils, or even angels, could stand in squadrons and swear unanimously that God had failed, call them liars too, for God cannot, cannot, cannot lie. The things which are seen are, after all, but mere shadows and dependent for their appearing and continuing upon the Lord alone. Why, then, confide in them at the expense of your confidence in God?

God only is, and when you have no hope but in Him alone, you have all the hope worth having. They say of us who trust in God alone that we have nothing to look to. Our answer is that faith in the unseen God is the highest reason and is grounded on the surest fact. His unseen arm is stronger than all that angel or human eye can ever see and there is more potency in God, who is neither to be heard nor seen, than in all the crash of whirlwinds or the glare of tempests. There is no power but in Him and therefore no certainty of infallible truth but in the word which He has spoken.

Look you, sirs, every promise in God's Word comes to you, first, from the Father's lip—will you doubt Him? It next comes by the Holy Ghost, who reveals it—will you doubt Him? Beware lest you sin against the Holy Ghost. It comes next sealed with the blood of Jesus. Will you doubt Him—will you suspect your Savior? A single doubt of a promise of God casts a stigma upon Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and is a triple transgression against the triune God. O the venom that lies in a single suspicion of the Most High!

It is strange how you and I can enter into confidence and conviction about many things and yet we cannot exercise the same confidence towards our God. You all believe in the laws of matter. You expect that the law of gravitation will bring a weight downward if you throw it from the window—why are you so certain? Because you have seen the rule in action so often that you now expect to see it carried out—and yet the law of gravitation might be suspended. Indeed, it has been suspended, for at the Red Sea the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

You all expect the sun to rise in the morning and to set at his appointed time, because he has kept his daily marches for many years. And yet there was a time when there was no sun to rise or set, and there will be a time when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and day and night shall cease. Can you trust the temporary and yet doubt the eternal?

You all expect the seasons of the year to come and go, but they might be reversed by God right easily. Now, if we can believe in the laws of nature, which are evidently changeable and which will one day certainly come to an end, how is it that we cannot believe in God whose regularity in the keeping of His promises has been as great as the regularity of day and night, of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and whose permanent immutability will run on throughout eternity? O that we were wise! O that we were commonly honest with God and spoke of Him as we have found Him! Then we should doubt Him no more, but abide in fixed and steadfast confidence. O Holy Spirit, work us to this end!

III. This brings me, in the third place, to dwell upon this sin very much in the same way, only with this heading—the sin bitterly DEPLORED.

We have all been guilty of it. Some here are living constantly in the commission of it. But what I need to call to your remembrance is this, that in any one case of doubting the truthfulness of God there is the full venom of the entire sin of unbelief. That is to say, if you distrust the Lord in one, you doubt Him altogether. You say that you can believe the Lord about other things, but there is one particular point which staggers you. But is it not clear that the man who is convicted of one falsehood is no longer trustworthy? The Scripture calls Him, "God who cannot lie." Do you think He can lie once, then He *can* lie and the Scripture is broken.

"Ah, but I mean He may not keep His promise *to me*. I am such an unworthy person." Yes, but when a man forfeits his word, it is no defense for him to say, "I told an untruth, but it was only to an unworthy person." No, the truth must be spoken irrespective of persons. I have no right to deceive even a criminal. Do you dare say that to one person the Lord can be untrue? If it can be so, He is not a true God any more. It only wants one falsehood, one breach of promise, one lie to be proved, and you have smitten the

character of the accused to the very heart—you would not dream of doing such a thing to the great God. You may as well doubt Him about everything if you distrust Him upon any one matter. Get but the promise from God and there is an infallible necessity that He shall keep it, be it a little promise or a great one, for the character of a truthful being is all square and He is false in nothing.

Do you reply that you doubted Him upon a very trivial matter and it was only a little mistrust? Alas, there is a world of iniquity in the faintest discredit of the thrice-holy Lord. Reflect, then, with sorrow that we have been guilty of this sin, not once, but a great many times. Timorousness and suspicion spring up in some bosoms like weeds in the furrows. They sing the Lord's praises for a great deliverance just experienced, but the next cloud which darkens the sky fills them with fear and they again mistrust divine love. Their heavenly Father delivers them, and helps them, and comforts them, and they say they will never doubt again, but in a short time another trial looms in the distance, and they are despondent and dismayed. Now, I will read to you, and I will read to myself these words of God, which make up our text, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?"

Another thought upon this point and it is this—are there not some professing people of God who do not seem to live a life of faith at all? I mean some who have no faith about their temporal circumstances at all and almost look upon living by faith as if it were a kind of fanaticism which they admit to be very pious and good, but they can never come up to it. Yet faith should be an everyday thing with us.

In the life of Abraham, how few acts are mentioned of outward religion, of long retirements, fasts, public services, sacraments, and so forth, but how clear it is that his daily secular and domestic life was a living unto God as a pilgrim and a sojourner with Him. There is no visible line between secular and sacred in the patriarch's life—it was all sacred.

It is an evil distinction which says so far is spiritual and so far is secular. My brethren, your whole lives must be spiritual lives, there must be faith in God about your home, your families, and your neighbors. Some look upon faith as a kind of Sunday grace to be laid up in the ark of the covenant with Aaron's rod, but indeed, it is an everyday faculty, a grace for the table, a grace for the cupboard, a grace for the pocket, a grace for the market, a grace for the nursery, and a grace for the sick bed.

The life of God's people is not to be lived within the four narrow walls of a meeting house—it is lived wherever they are, for in every place the just shall live by faith. The religion of a Christian is to be the whole of his life and faith is to run through it like a thread through a necklace of coral. We are to believe God as much when He says, "Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure," as when He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, for more household faith, more Saturday faith, more real faith! Let us blush and never cease to blush that we have had so little of it.

IV. Lastly, as we have now deplored this sin, we shall conclude by spending a moment or two in heartily **DENOUNCING IT**.

This sin of unbelief, if there were no other reason for denouncing it, let it be reprobated because *it insults God*. I feel an infinite enmity to unbelief because it so terribly misrepresents and calumniates my God. If any man were to say to me, "Your father breaks his word," I would not suffer the accuser to go unanswered and assuredly I cannot be silent when my heavenly Father is thus slandered. Our race fell by believing the old dragon's base charge against God when he said to the woman in his vile serpentine language, "You shall not surely die." He thus gave God the lie.

Away with you, you subtle serpent! Away with you! Go and eat the dust that is your predestinated meat, for God cannot speak that which is not true—He is truth itself. How greatly does unbelief dishonor the Lord! What shame it casts upon the splendor of His name! Alas, that there should be going up and down this world creatures denying the existence of their Creator, and other beings who admit that there is a God, and believe that He has spoken and given promise of good things to come, but treat His word as if it were worthless and unfit to be trusted. Oh, hateful, abominable, loathsome mistrust which dares to treat the Lord as unworthy to be believed!

This is sufficient reason for denouncing it and yet since weaker reasons may perhaps help the stronger, let me mention that we are bound to hate unbelief because *it is the ruin of the great mass of our race*. Why are men lost? All their sins which they have done cannot destroy them if they believe in Jesus, but the damning point is that they will not believe in Him. Thus says the Scriptures, “He that believes not is condemned already.” Why? “Because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

God Himself hangs on a tree in human form and bleeds to death bearing the sin of man, and yet men turn their backs on this infinite display of love and refuse to believe it, and therefore do they to sink to death and hell. I look upon the myriads now in outer darkness and I ask, “Who slew all these?” The answer is, “They could not enter into heaven because of unbelief—they perished because they would not believe in the testimony of God concerning reconciliation by the blood of His Son.” May we not well hate this murderous unbelief?

We may hate it, again, because *it brings so much misery and weakness upon the children of God*. My brethren, if we believed God’s promises, we should no longer be bowed down with sorrow, for our sorrow would be turned into joy. We would glory in our infirmities—yea, we should glory in tribulation also, seeing the good result which the Lord brings forth from them. The man who steadily believes His God is calm, quiet, and strong. If men fail him, his God supports him.

Suppose his business fails him—his chief business is to serve his God, and that has not failed. If he is himself sick and racked with pain, he resigns himself to the great Father’s chastening hand and patience is given. If health is utterly failing, he leaves himself with God that he may take down his tabernacle curtain by curtain, confident that he will build it again in nobler form. When death approaches, he so fully believes in God that he feels it will be gain to him to pass out of this state of trial into everlasting blessedness at the Lord’s right hand, and so he is always happy. How strong such a man becomes. The weakness which comes of fear and trembling does not touch him. His heart is fixed and therefore he has all his strength under control and can bring it to bear upon the place where it is needed.

I do not know whether you have thought of the prowess of Samson. His is a very poor character in many aspects, but yet what a true hero he is when you view him in the light of his faith. It was not that he was physically strong by nature, but that he believed God and strength came upon him. As a believer in God, he trusted that the Lord could make his sinews and muscles strong enough for any task which was allotted him. And so, when the gates of Gaza shut him in, he rose up from his sleep and bowed himself before the huge doors, and with a mighty tug lifted them up. And as the bars were fastened to the posts, he pulled up posts and all, and carried the whole away to the top of the hill—not as a feat of Herculean strength—but as an act of faith in God.

But now the Philistines are upon him. He is upon a rock and cannot escape. He believes in God and he quails not before the host. There are a thousand of the enemy and he is but one—he looks for a weapon and there is nothing handy for him to fight with but a dried bone which once had made the jaw of an ass. What matters? He trusts in God and not in the weapon. See how the Philistines fly before him, or would do so if they could, for with foot, and knee, and hand, Samson is upon them and his terrible arm sweeps them down in rows.

This great child-man was a terrible believer, and when the divine fury of his faith was upon him, he was altogether irresistible. Odds he never reckoned, nor staggered at the promise through unbelief. It was a grand deed for one man to fling himself upon a thousand. I like him better in such silent daring than even when he cries, “Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men.”

Only believe God and you can do anything. If the Lord should bid you shake the world, you could do it by faith. Plucking up sycamore trees by the roots and hurling mountains into the sea are mere sport for faith, which before now has subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. She has grander things to do than the mere slaying of Philistines, for she wrestles with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, and comes off more than conqueror through Him that loved her.

And yet, my friend, are you hiding in the rear? You are lying in the stroller, you are being nursed and cared for as a babe! Shall it always be so? Will you forever be a mere child? If you do not believe, you will never grow strong, but he that believes comes to the full development of that celestial manhood which is akin to the manhood of the Christ of God in whom we live.

One very shocking point about this unbelief is that *it has hampered the work of Christ in the world*. The Christ that can save is a Christ believed in, but of a Christ who is not believed in it is written, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” The reason why at this time whole nations lie under popery or heathenism is that the church has not faith enough for their conquest. There is no straitening in God—our limit lies in our own timorous hearts. The first thing to be done is for Zion to believe in God, and then the rod of His strength shall go forth out of her midst, and she shall become, “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

If the Son of Man should now come on the earth, where would He find faith? Where would He discover a high degree of it? You know what most churches do—there is the regular performance of divine service, the regular preaching of an orthodox sermon as dry as it is orthodox, the regular meeting of a few people for a praying meeting, in which there is no real prayer, and the regular revolution of a spiritual barrel organ, from which all spirituality has long ago been ground out. Nothing comes of this lifeless routine and it was never likely that there could be anything, for out of death, death alone can come.

When we begin to preach in faith, believing that men must be saved by the Gospel, they will be saved by it. When we go forth to battle, confident that the weapon of the Gospel in the hand of God cannot fail, it will not fail. It is want of faith on our part which causes the eternal God to put His right hand into His bosom and keep it there. When once the Holy Spirit has wrought a mighty faith in us—and we shall never have it till He does—then will the Lord lay bare His arm and we shall see marvelous things. His own right hand and His holy arm will get Him the victory.

The world has never seen since apostolic times what yet shall happen in our own day if we will but believe. If we will but confide in God, our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams, and then shall be poured out upon the Lord’s servants and handmaidens of His own Spirit and they shall prophesy. Then will the world wake up and cry, “The old fanaticism has come back. These men are drunk with new wine.” It will only be that they speak as the Spirit gives them utterance, for He works mightily where faith is mighty, and He is restrained because of this wretched, wicked, insulting, blasphemous unbelief of ours that will persist in suspecting the Lord.

Forward, brethren. God the Holy Ghost helping you, resolve in your hearts this day that all the boasted discoveries of science you will doubt, all the affirmations of the wise you will doubt, all the speculations of great thinkers you will doubt, all your own feelings and all the conclusions drawn from outward circumstances you will doubt, yea, and everything that seems to be demonstrable to a certainty you will doubt, but never, never, never, while eternity shall last, will you suffer the thought to pass your mind that God can ever in the least degree run back from anything that He has spoken or change the word that has gone forth of His lips.

Thus have I spoken for Him. May His Holy Spirit make it powerful on your minds, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—NUMBERS 13:20-33; 14:1-25;
HEBREWS 3:7-19
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—192, 229, 670**

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.